Sentence Composition: Language Map of Beginner Writers

Shalawati[1], Sitti Hadijah[1]
[1]Universitas Islam Riau
email: shalawati@edu.uir.ac.id
email: sittihadijah@edu.uir.ac.id

Abstract

This research was initiated to study the pattern of sentences written by students who were considered as beginner in their writing work. The further aim upon the study was to see what majority of the group approaches in developing their sentences in regards of their linguistic process as well as their idea organization. In respond to its initial drives, this study was approached in qualitative manner. There were 30 papers were examined and analyzed to synthesize the working approaches by the writers at common system and the attention was brought the individual sentence character and ideas organization throughout sentences and paragraphs. The findings suggest that the sentences were relatively good on language part but once the writing topics require their opinion and existing information, it started to decrease its quality. In such of writing, overgeneralized ideas and illogical structures are common. Therefore, since the writers were beginners, this research suggests supporting system that help the writers cope with their language barriers through introducing language on more complex language forms and together with practices. In addition to this, to support writers as the task environment increases reading materials are essential to help them build a more thoughtful writing piece.

Keywords: *Writing, Sentence, Beginner*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilskuksn untuk mempelajari pola kalimat yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa yang dianggap pemula dalam menulis. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat pendekatan yang dilakukan oleh para mahasiswa dalam mengembangkan kalimat mereka dalam hal proses linguistik mereka serta organisasi ide. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif. Ada 30 makalah yang diperiksa dan dianalisis untuk mensintesis pendekatan yang dilakukan oleh para penulis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kalimat-kalimat yang dihasilkan mahasiswa relatif baik pada bagian bahasa, tetapi topik penulisan membutuhkan pendapat mereka dan informasi yang ada, itu mulai menurunkan kualitasnya. Dalam tulisan seperti itu, ide-ide yang terlalu umum dan struktur tidak logis adalah hal-hal yang sering ditemukan. Oleh karena itu, karena penulis adalah pemula, penelitian ini menyarankan untuk mendukung sistem yang membantu para penulis mengatasi hambatan bahasa mereka dengan memperkenalkan bahasa pada bentuk bahasa yang lebih kompleks dan melatih mereka untuk menuliskannya. Selain itu, untuk mendukung penulis sangat perlu untuk memberikan tugas tambahan mebaca menjadi sangat penting untuk meningkatkan keterampilan mereka dalam menulis.

Kata Kunci: *Menulis, Kalimat, Pemula*

1 INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is deemed as little further advanced skill in language skills. To many of Indonesian students, or generally non-native English speaker, this is not a piece of cake to take, as it is not merely about putting words on papers or computers, it is about sophisticated process taking place in the brain that involves engineering words, generating ideas, grammar shifting from mother language and other aspect taking place while writing. Due to the fact, many have tried to avoid the class and simply just drop the process. However, to those who are challenged for particular purpose, professional, academic, personal interest, take attentive steps and put some serious thought in developing the skill. As the results, great success is possible to achieve.

To put idea on English writing work, one needs to work closely with language system or grammar. In the area where I am teaching this mode of issue strongly appears in the writing work. However each comes in different form of challenge, looking at the English level and reading habit. For instance, at prelimenary data, for many beginners, creating a sentence with incomplete English structure, not presenting subject or verb, commonly emerge. But no further information at scientific level on how this sentence production could come on the surface at this local isolated case. I am assuming the possibility of sophisticated interferences- bahasa Indonesia writing, limited grammar understanding, writing and reading culture, affect towards this outcome.

Furthermore, with the rise of online social media from which short form of writing are in favour to read, due to its less brainy demanding, eyed-catching writing font and shape and entertaining-such-readings. This may contribute further to lower capacity in writing a more complicated writing and the level of writing clarity ¬¬due to unfamiliar pattern of sentence, vocabulary and the tone of sentence.

And beside that, ideas and content of writing, at some degree, also are affected by readings. It appears in many of the writing paper that students with lack of supporting ideas and details tend to put repetive statement at all over the writing work. So, at some points, reading strongly support better quality writing, in the case of ideas and vocabulary.

There appears as well that locally in Indonesia, the culture of reading books and writing is not popular to the majority. This culture is of academician or people of study-oriented group. In common acknowledge, during Dutch colonialism, a great deal of historical moment was recorded, piled up and kept in the Netherland, from where Indonesians could see and understand their history through books, notes, and other writing forms. To the recent days, it is suggested of better planning at national level to introduce different reading or text that is great step towards writing generation. Despite of bitterness for writing teacher, there is possibility to introduce writing culture and expand communication through writing.

At deeper look is writing in English which is a foreign language on one side and different from Bahasa Indonesia grammar system. It is at common understanding to hear that writing is hardcore subject. As briefly statted above that it is complicated underlying factors contribute to the success of one's writing in English. As foresaid, writing is sophisticated skill which require sufficient information, vocabularies, some grammar knowledge, and writing technique or rhetorical structure. It takes a lot of courage and discipline to learn and practice.

And in the classroom, an English teacher should be aware of this and at a great deal of time review the material approach.

However, in the case of English curriculum in Indonesia, at certain level, this seems of rather difficult to achieve since mixed-level group classroom and of different area background. Curriculum targets and detailed per lesson plan is not an easy thing for both teacher and students, unless they have reached some 'mature' English that they can play with different structure forms.

In a brief summary, this research exposes strong interest to see further detail of paper work and students perspective on writing English and it is looking forward to see how beginner writer in English in Riau work with English language system through their writing pieces. Hereby, this research idea is proposed for detailed study on topics foresaid.

What being cover within this section is cognitive development in writing, language and written communication.

Writing Cognitive

There is obvious belief that composition is process of making decision and choice. To respond of this belief then, it is interesting review to see the governing system of the brain on how the choice is made.

Flower and Hayes (1981, pp. 365-371) elaborate in their research report that writing is seen as thinking process in which ideas are tailored to during the composing. And this covers stage models –including pre-writing, writing and rewriting, cognitive process model that looks at the sub process of the planning and overview model which looks at the nature of one particular assigned writing process, meaning to write on goal-oriented thinking process, in the example of school assignment.

They further set forth that they include two other points that contribute to the cognitive process. First is written text, as a writer proceed writing task situation, this will contrain what to say and furthermore, title also leads to limit the topic sentence and paragraph growth. Eventually, limitation of what coming next is assured. The second one is memory. Long-term memory is existing information in the brain and this is stable entity in the storehouse that is accessible for any writers to retrieve.

Looking deeper to the mind process, Hayes (2014) summarizes and entwines his findings from 2001 researches. He found that there are two levels to see in the writing cognition: resources and process level.

Resource takes up everything related to attention, long-term and working memory and reading- as resources or re-reading. Attention is the ability of writer to focus in completion of a task. Meanwhile, long-term memory helps writer with knowledge-a complex source including language itself. For example, number of years in experiencing a language impact writing quality, so does ample of knowledge. It is proven that this impacts at immediate manner to the writing.

In the relation to working memory, Hayes found that those with high working memory produce more accurate writing. Working memory is a system in the brain which help cognitive operation. This memory is like multiple memories in Mathematics that support calculation works.

Reading which refers to referencing to other sources and re-reading the written work its self is part of the writing cognitive work. In adult writing, referring to sources is mainly due to the task environment.

Beginner writers, on the other hand, take some repetition of reading while working on it and frequently followed by immediate revision.

Regarding process level, Hayes further suggests that adult writers write a text language burst with average of 6-12 words in length.

Chenoweth and Hayes (2014) see that for cognitive processes involved in language bursts; a proposer, a translator, an evaluator and a transcriber. A proposer acts as ideas given from which the ideas are to pass to translator. A proposer receives ideas from task environment and long-term memory which are all in non-verbal form. Then, a translator will shift ideas into grammatical strings of language in the form of visual or auditory expression. Chenoweth and Hayes (2001 and 2003) found that verbal working memory and linguistics experience of a writer give strong influence to his/her translator's work.

In the final stages, a transcriber put the strings from a translator into written text. Meanwhile, an evaluator assesses of other cognitive processes. The evaluator may reject the ideas in advance of its translation or transcription. Or this may not occur or rarely occur in some writing strategies.

Writing in the perspective of Non Native Speakers

Looking at a far deeper of writing English to non native is also different at vast aspect to writing English to native English writer. The process impact beyond cognitive process but social, cultural and educational background substantially different.

In the nature of human language, speaking and writing are not of naturally the same acquisition. This leads to important calling to the development of writing. Kaplan and Grabe (2014, p. 3-5)

support this nature in their book that writing ability is not natural acquisition, in comparison to speaking, as it requires more of cultural aspect involving process of learning.

Further explain, they argue writing as technology which required skills that must be practiced and learned through practices. This is so to speak leads that writing to be a major issues for students, moreover to non native speakers of English.

Supporting the opinion, Liberman and Liberman (1990) emphasize writing accompanies maturation which takes process-training, instruction, practice, experience and purpose. Of the both research highlight, the overview of underlying factors drive barriers for non native English writer in writing.

Therefore, further information related to the background of writers in their habit of writing should be taking as serious information on this study.

Language and written Communication

Writing can be considered as current innovation compared to speaking. History saw that written language recorded historical evidence of little more than 6000 years.

Through the history of literacy, it sugests that reading and writing inherited to the coming generation by social and cultural demands. The skills to be less attended once appropriate social and cultural supports are not available.

On the other aspect the writing form of information is also impacted by religious institution from which history also reveals strong influences of writing as well as reading in many respects.

Writing and Grammar

At English writing as second language or foreign language, writing is hard-wired

with language system or grammar. The constrains of grammar are many believed to be a great deal other than social, cultural and educational background.

Weaver and Bush (2008) bring about underlying principles in producing high-quality grammar in writing. The principle drive the importance of grammar quality that strongly and massively impact the quality of writings. As stated in the earlier section that part of cognitive process of writing is resource level- in which linguistics experience signifies in producing high quality writing.

2. METHOD

The research is to be approached through qualitative design, exploratory. Prior to practical touch on the writing work, this research looks deeply on how an English learner acquire writing skill and how this applies to beginner English writers.

Meanwhile the sample of this research were be a pile of writing essays by 30 students of an English department in their second year in Pekanbaru. Out of the paper, the study looked through the line of the sentences.

In the last approach, the data analysis took place in three steps; identification, classification and by the end the result of interview was incorporated to the initial data collection. And the final look of the result is seen as approaches of the students in constructing the sentences and their mind background which drives the process.

Research Design
Being part of exploratory, this study is prepared in the form of qualitative descriptive design which covers exploration of the sample papers of English beginner writer and in-depth interview with the writers. Therefore, field study was integrated for cross-checking data. Some important documents such as, writing papers and interview results log are essential to support validity of this research result.

Sample and source of data
As the research document is the main focus of this research, it looked through the paper documents which consist of 100 papers. The paper is about 150 words to 200 words papers on a particular topic.

All of the papers were written by students who are believed to be at pre-intermediate level, with writing skill at beginner standard.
And the interviews were carried out with the 30 writers and later for FGD as well.

Data Collection Technique
The papers are derived from a writing that were created in classroom atmosphere in which there was internet connection and opened book system.
The writer were proceed to write one specific topic that require their opinion to be put accross the papers, under one to two hours timing with the limitation of 150 -200 words short essay.

Upon the completing of the analysis, the interviews and FGDs were carried out to match the finding what the writers actually think of. The interviews were aimed to see the writing process happen to them, their thought over writing, challenges, and approaches to finish up the task. And the question regarding their English linguistics experience and their ideas organization were as well addressed during these.

Data Analysis
The 30 papers were reviewed and carefully checked for some common patterns; sentence forms, length, connectors, punctuation and ideas structures.

As per mention in the above, data classification took place as the initial analysis technique. The data was tabulated into several sections to overview common frame of the writing patterns which are sentence forms and structure, length of sentences, connectors used, punctuation, capitalization, ideas structuring. Attempts to incorporate a more complex were part of reviewing process, in which this allows to see how the writers manage their information in the sentences.

What is expected during this process is to figure out the pattern and common senses in constructing the sentences. To avoid one-sided assumption that may lead to bias result, this findings were re-checked its validity through interview and focus group discussion. The interviews incorporated some questions related to what is behind the paper work, on how they decide their writing strategies.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This finding section presents the research results of its paper analysis and interviews. The data was approached through two main ways; documentary evaluation and interview.

All of the 30 papers were examined from the sentence composition and ideas structure. The students were from three groups and each had different topics to write – moment of change, the importance of seeking knowledge for young people, and are today's women losing their womanly skills?. The writers were given freedom to choose on whether they organize their writings, with outline or without outline prior to writing. This was set to see how the organizations of the essay look with or without outline as well.

Then, some questions were developed to address the writers regarding their writings, how they started it off, challenges, preparations, final review, ideas, grammar, task environment, peer review, discussion with friends or their tutor, and language barriers.

The following is the detail findings of both language and content structure that base the beginner writers. Within this analysis the four components of writing cognitive are closely incorporated to build better comprehension on what the actual happening with the brain processes.

Language form
As mentioned in chapter two, Hayes (2014) elaborates that there are four that involve in writing cognitive process namely; a proposer, a translator, a transcriber, and evaluator. All of the papers examined suggest that each of the four components of within cognitive process serves the process with different degrees of success which certainly impact the quality of the writing itself. Seeing at the language produced, overall, the translator process of the writers makes major color to their writing look.

There are several common findings in most of the papers in which suggest their language development and for teachers or the writers themselves, this could be beneficial information for them to make further steps to develop their students' skills. In the following subsections are some details of the findings.

In most of the papers reviewed, the sentence composition took majority of simple, compound and complex sentences, with the length of 10 – 30 words per sentence. Majority of the simple sentences and compound sentences are with few attempts to produce complex sentence but only a few appear with correct grammatical order.

This is an example a paragraph of one group member who selected to write on their moment of change in their life:
Example 4.1.1

> *'When I was still study at junior high school, in the morning, before I leaving to school, I feel always lazy to go because of afraid to study with Mathematic teacher. And that happen for long time, until I still study in class 3 junior high school. I ever not coming to school whit the reason sick which I am not sick. I and my friends always afraid to study with the teacher in the study because mathematic teacher very fierce. So that I think can't make student understand.'*

Example 4. 1. 2

> *'Knowledge is a science or information that is obtained through experience and from education. We can gained knowledge from anywhere and anyone. To gained a knowledge, there is stage. First, perception and then learning. Communication association and go ahead to A thought. Why knowledge are important For young People? There are reason why knowledge is important For young PeoPle, first because with knowledge we can differentiate between good and bad. Second, with knowledge everything* look easy. And Third with knowledge we will be more advanced and can faced challenge that faced in the future'

Example 4.1. 3

> *Nowadays, many woman lose their womanly skills because they all just want to do it quickly. Like, order online, or buy outside. Usually, those that are ready to be served. They don't have to bother anymore. For example, making cookies for Eid Mubarak. Now it's very rare to find people who make their own cookies. Many of them order some through online application. But, not all of them is like them. There is some of them are making their own cookies along with their families.*

this research and some are with better grammar operations. To few writers, their writing appears to be better and the writers are able to handle information within a sentence by incorporating phrases, relative clauses, and commas. There were similar form of sentences occur in individual of the students. And there is very likely that majority of them are at the same level of English skill and with the same common understanding of how English operates.

At detail level, there is tendency of simple sentence construction with some reduction in structure component such as missing auxiliary. The missing subject and verb with sentences are often found when the writers tried to mention and wrongly put punctuation in. In the example of the first paragraph, the typical sentence can be identified.

Example 4.1.4

'I ever not coming to school whit the reason sick which I am not sick.'

Then, the common pattern of their sentence structure in term of tenses is that they mostly wrote in simple tense pattern even though they were writing different time context. These practices are pretty much common in these writings, as it is shown in the following sample sentence.

Example 4. 1.5

> *' When I was still study at Junior high school, in the morning, before I leaving to school, I feel always lazy to go because of afraid to study with the Mathematic teacher and that happen for long time until I study in class 3 junior high school'.*

Meanwhile, at this level of writing skill, there appears effort to incorporate a more complex sentence composition by including clauses, despite their skill seem to be at construction sentence with some pretty basic grammar. Below show how the writers misplaced the position of relative clause within their sentence.

Example 4.1.6

> *'Learning about skills can be which is allocated sometime at any time in your free time, be it on holidays or free time not learning because this is the right time to learn in this skills'.*

In general, their sentence forms go with the same patterns:

1. Mainly simple sentences or compound sentences with mostly connected with and
2. No to seldom passive forms occur in the sentences
3. Attempts to developing independent phrases and relative and noun clauses yet majority wrote in wrong position

For example, the above paragraph sentence in the example 4.1.1: ' I ever not coming to school whit the reason sick which I am not sick. The dependent clause is not supposed to be put after

the word sick which is impossible sick to be sick. This form of sentences can be found in most of the papers.

4. Majority wrote understandable sentences with some frequent grammar mistakes with:

- Main verbs

Main verbs are frequently wrong that take form in different errors

- Tenses

Despite of frequent learning of tenses in grammar classes, the application of correct tenses is different challenges to the writers.

- Capitalization

This issue seems to be beyond comprehension on why capitalization remains strong presence error in all papers.

    This can be seen in the sample sentence below

Example 4.1.7

> *' The experience occur when I am grade 7 junior high school. My teacher gave us about how to read poetry, gave punctuation and will come forward next week'.*

5. The ability to develop a sentence up to 38 words, of the longest, is common on the papers. And this is very interesting to see their confidence in constructing such long ones.

Example 4.1.8

> *From here take the wisdom you have thick hair that you can't show your nakedness so you don't want to wear short clothes or shorts and because your forehead is wide you can cover it in a veil'.*

6. Few are still with problem distinguishes its, it is and its and their, they or there
7. There are also indicator of weakness in using article the, a and a.

The form of weakness appears when the writer tend to put the with indefinite noun that mislead the meaning of the entire sentence. An example is given in this sentence that initially written in the beginning of essay.

Example 4. 1. 9

> *Talked about womanly skills, I half agree and half disagree that woman are losing their womanly skills. Woman who live in the city and village has different womanly skills.*

The word *the* is used instead a, after interview some writers said that the understand how to use the in English but they do not fully aware and understand when they actually put them in sentence. However, this is not major faults occur. Most of them show strong understanding on where to put *the* in their sentences.

8. Word composition is simple, merely just adjective plus noun or noun plus noun format. Other form of adjective form are not detected.
9. Unable to handle double verb within a sentence.

The research suggests that the writers cannot handle sentences with double verbs and it is believed that linguistic barrier. The example of the sentence is the following:
Example 4.1.10

> *'The core of the problem are seatmate laughed at me'.*

The writer just straight away put the two verbs in the sentence without adjusting it through proper grammar rules. Instead of writing, laughing, she wrote laughed because it happened in the past. This suggests, in the area of teaching writing, English teacher should address such confusing structure for students prior to writing class, in particular classes at pre intermediate level of English.

These finding may lead to incorporation of some basic grammar prior to certain period of writing classes. Regarding these particular writers that this research worked on, there are grammar rules to be included; various adjective compositions, dependent clauses –adjective, noun and adverb and that included reduced form (to anticipate double verb occurrence in sentences), editing skills, articles, tenses – at application understanding. Basically, the structure of language are there in the writers mind, they just need some reinforcement of some basic grammar for their sentence refinement.

Ideas Development
Interestingly, the writers from the three group suggest themselves equipped with strong awareness to write their ideas in separated paragraphs, with introduction, body paragraph and conclusion, only a few wrote whole one big massive paragraph. This section also discusses the characters of the writings by the beginners; overgeneralization, some illogical structure

due wrong grammatical strings, and western- songs influence.
a.   Ideas Organization
There were different approaches made to develop the writing – with and without developing outline prior to writing. They shared different rationale underpinning the initial steps in developing their writings. Those who set an outline prior to the composition set forth that the outline eases their writing work in organizing ideas and finishing their work faster. However the other writers that decide to write without outline argued that outline resist them in writing and this cause some level of stress, writing without outline free them from such resistance in their brain.

However, it turns out that writings without outline tends to be overgeneralized and not very structured compared to those who wrote with outline. And there was one particular writer who submitted without outline but then she tried herself a new writing work with outline, and she found herself worked easier with outline. She admitted that it took sometimes for her to think deeper before writing but, after that, she found that it is easier to set a writing plan than without a plan.
b.   Overgeneralization
Looking into overgeneralization sentences, the writers tend to construct very common sentences, in particular in the writings where opinion is main task environment. Group that were asked to write about their personal life, food preference or their life moment of change, they were relatively successful to develop meaningful sentence with clear argument. However, those who were assigned to design writing on the importance of seeking knowledge, they some kind of fail to develop precise arguments merely something general.
Here is one of paragraph that is considered overgeneralized;

Example 4.2.1

'Religious and moral education is very helpful for children. Because religious education is one of the important education that must be taught and accustomed to children from early.'

The above sentence was made in very common idea without any supporting ideas to show how religion is helpful for the children. After careful analysis, it appears that writers who developed outlines wrote a more organized and supplied sufficient argument to their writing compared to those who did not. A deeper interview addressed to them revealed that those who were able to develop outline prior to writing own some knowledge or sufficient information on what to write, in the contrast, those who did not own insufficient existing information.

An evaluator cognitive process plays back and forth evaluation to those without outline and forces them to keep changing their writing ideas while writing. However, the outline makers employed evaluator at the initial of their writings with only minor evaluation to the entire writing work later.

c. Illogical Structures

This pattern of structure is part of the impact of limited English grammatical experience. The more opinion given to the sentence, the stronger this structure appears. The following is the example how this form occurs in the text:

Example 4.2.2

'Today many people lose their skills and there are event people who have no knowledge of this skill at all. This is because womans today almost prefer to continue their education and focus on studying so they don't pay attention to other skills.'

Both of the sentence above are not supporting one another, beside the ideas provided are so much general. The underlined words were not logically handled so that the first idea is specified in the next sentence. It is not logical to blame woman for people to loose their skills, even if it is so, no precise idea given on how it is so.

The illogical structure is common to happen to those without preparing outline so that insufficient information within the writers' mind worsens once the linguistics experience is minor. So, this research sees that preparing some level of outline and ideas is so much important for better quality of writings.

d. Western-song Influence

There is also an indication that the writer suggest themselves took some of their English vocabulary or writing form from songs. There are some sentences that show of using the 'gonna' instead of going to or 'wanna' instead of want to. The two words are rather less found to occur. However, the use of the word 'cause' instead of 'because' is frequent appearance. When addressed on why they selected such words, they admitted that they got the words from songs and they did not realize of the two language forms application.

The general map of the sentence composition found in the writings can be found in the attachment:

To conclude that most challenges that these beginners face is that in translator phase in which they begin trying to put across ideas in proper English language systems. Despite of these problems though, many of them were managed to execute the language challenge into understandable forms through fraction of language such as phrases or composing word at minimum words.

Meanwhile, an evaluator cognitive process takes minimum form, at which this only place within a sentence not at the entire writing evaluation. To most writers, they did not even re-read the composition. They said that they were so nervous about their work and they decided to give up any proof reading or simply final reviewing because there was no confidence to read their own writings. It is really interesting to see in further researches the level of confidence impact towards writing quality and improvement.

At last, this research sees that the patterns found are a general frame of writers' strength and weakness that should be addressed, especially in English classes, so that the students are equipped with some basic skills of writing and grammar system to ease their learning system.

4. CONCLUSION

This research sees several opportunities and recommendation present to English teaching at any educational institutions. The finding draws lines of several approaches that expand beyond teaching writing, it is grammar and reading teaching that underlies the writing quality.

As foreign language, putting across ideas into written English texts is high demand of skill. Barrier of linguistic experience span along of its interlanguage process and each level of the process are with its unique traits.

The four cognitive processes each were experienced by the writers at different degree. Writers that did not have enough existing memories tend to skip developing outline in which proposer process retrieve limited ideas to pass to translator. Writers with English grammatical problem had problems to put through the ideas in proper English strings. In addition to this, the writers that had more barrier in proposer appeared to have less understood English sentences.

This section also wraps lesson-learned derived from the research finding that could be seen as feedback, further steps plan, ideas, research ideas and information, whatever that fit for writers themselves, researchers and teachers working in English language teaching industry. The following are some recommendations to any writing classes in English to provide complimentary courses or materials to support any beginner writer in making their writing work successful.

a. Some basic grammar practices in advanced of writing class

b. School provides book with simple writing practices from smaller composition units to the higher

c. Beginners tend to work better when task environment is personal related topics. Any personal related topics should be given to improve their skill at initial stage.

d. Once the writing topics move to a more argumentative topics, they tend to write rather overgeneralized their ideas in the writings, therefore, in this kind of task, they should be supported with some reading supports.

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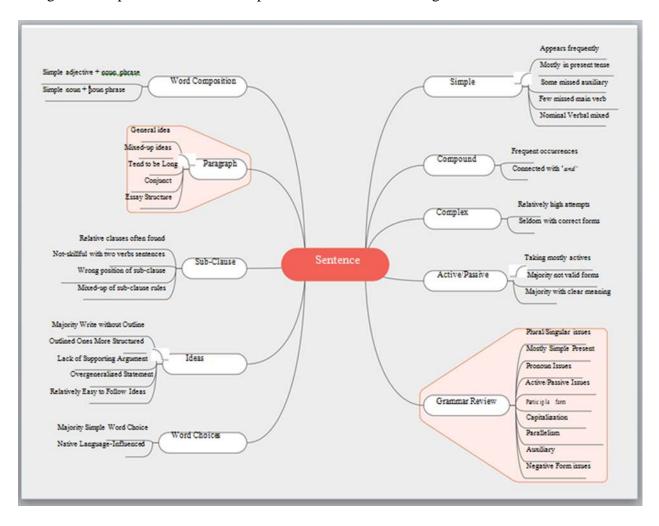
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Appendix

The general map of the sentence composition found in the writings